



The legend of the Kibrahacha tree

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LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK

PROFESSIONAL COMPLIMENTARY
PICTURES ON TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

SUNDAY:

MARRYBELL MADURO
SINGER
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

MONDAY:

ANDERSON BAHAMON
SINGER
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

TUESDAY:

JEAN PAUL
SAXOPHONIST
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

WEDNESDAY:

MAILLEYN ALVARADO
VIOLINIST
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

THURSDAY:

MARRYBELL MADURO
SINGER
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

FRIDAY:

MAILLEYN ALVARADO
VIOLINIST
7:00 TO 9:00 P.M.

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New Yorker transforms tiny apartment into immersive 'Oz' wonderland

NEW YORK, NY — In the heart of Manhattan's concrete jungle, where gray skyscrapers and steel subways dominate the landscape, a single door on the fourth floor of an unassuming West Village walk-up leads to a world of technicolor.

Sarah Boll, a 32-year-old freelance graphic designer, has spent the last eighteen months turning her 450-square-foot studio apartment into a living, breathing tribute to the 1939 classic *The Wizard of Oz*. What started as a weekend DIY project to "brighten up a dark corner" has evolved into a national viral sensation, proving that with a little imagination—and a lot of emerald green paint—there truly is no place like home.

A departure from the ordinary

Stepping across the threshold of Boll's apartment is an experience in sensory transition. The entryway is painted in sepia tones, a deliberate nod to the film's Kansas beginnings, complete with a weathered-looking "storm cellar" door that cleverly hides her coat closet. But as you move into the main living area, the world explodes into color.

A hand-painted yellow brick road winds across the hardwood floors, leading visitors



past a velvet "Poppy Field" sofa and toward a kitchen nook that has been transformed into the Emerald City. The cabinets are lacquered in a high-gloss malachite green, accented by art-deco gold handles that shimmer under recessed LED lighting.

"People think I'm crazy when I tell them I painted my ceiling blue with hand-stitched silk clouds," Boll says with a laugh, gesturing to the "Ozian sky" above her bed. "But when I come home after a long day in the city, I don't feel like I'm in a cramped apartment. I feel like I'm in a storybook. We all need a little escapism sometimes."

The power of "Dopamine Decor"

Boll is at the forefront of a rising interior design trend known as "Dopamine Decor"—the practice of decorating a home specifically to trigger joy and nostalgia rather than adhering to minimalist or "resale-ready" aesthetics. In a post-pandemic world where home has become an office, a gym, and a sanctuary, more Americans are ditching beige walls for bold, personal expressions.

Dr. Aris Thorne, a color psychologist, notes that Boll's project is more than just fandom. "The use of satu-

rated greens and yellows, combined with nostalgic themes, creates a neurological 'safe space.' By physically manifesting a world that represents triumph over adversity—which is the core of the *Oz* story—Sarah is literally building a resilience chamber."

Crafting a masterpiece on a budget

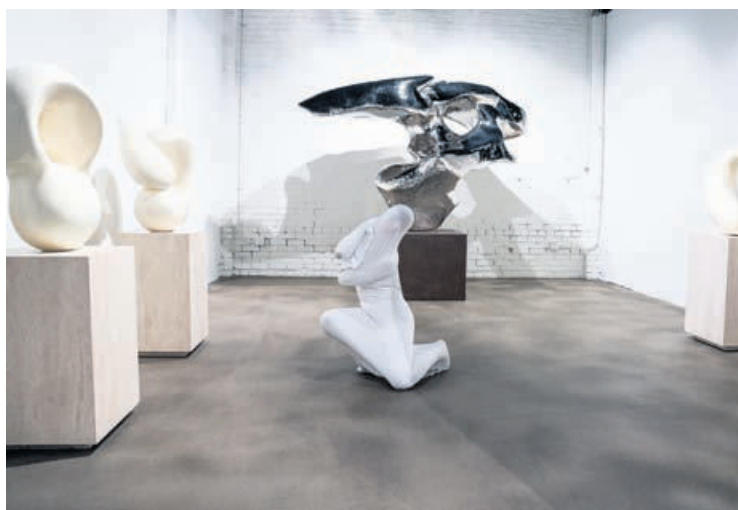
While the apartment looks like a high-budget film set, Boll insists that 80% of the transformation was achieved through "thrifting and tinkering." The iconic "Ruby Slipper" chair in the corner? A \$15 find from a curbside trash pile, reupholstered with sequined fabric

found at a remnant sale. The "Flying Monkey" sconces? Plastic toy figurines spray-painted bronze and mounted on thrifted lamp bases. "I wanted to show people that you don't need a million dollars to live in a dream world," Boll says. "You just need a hot glue gun and the willingness to fail a few times before you get it right." Her journey, documented on social media under the handle @OverTheRainbowDIY, has inspired thousands of followers to start their own themed rooms. From "Star Wars" bathrooms to "Alice in Wonderland" dining nooks, the "Boll Effect" is encouraging renters to stop waiting for their "forever home" to start living in a space they love.

A beacon of joy

The "Wizard of Oz" home has become such a local landmark that Boll occasionally hosts "Munchkin Tea Parties" for her neighbors. Even the local mail carrier has been known to linger a moment longer at her door just to catch a glimpse of the glowing green hallway.

As the sun sets over the Hudson River, the light hits the glass crystals Boll has hung in her windows, casting rainbows across the yellow brick road on her floor. It is a quiet, sparkling reminder that even in the busiest city on Earth, magic is something you can build for yourself. □



CHARLESTON, SC — In the quiet, sun-drenched halls of the Riverside Gallery, the air doesn't smell like a clinical waiting room. Instead, it carries the faint, earthy scent of linseed oil and fresh watercolor paper. Here, a groundbreaking new program is proving

that for those recovering from trauma and chronic illness, a paintbrush might be just as vital as a prescription.

The "Art for Healing" initiative, which launched earlier this year across a network of ten coastal galleries, is moving art out of the

Brushstrokes of hope: Local galleries prescribe art as the newest form of healing

realm of "decoration" and into the front lines of mental health and physical recovery.

The science of serenity

While the idea of "art therapy" isn't new, the scale and scientific backing of this local movement are. Recent studies from the University of South Carolina have shown that just 45 minutes of creative activity significantly lowers cortisol levels—the body's primary stress hormone—regardless of the person's artistic "skill" level.

"When a survivor of trauma picks up a piece of char-

coal, they aren't just drawing; they are externalizing an emotion that words can't reach," says Dr. Elena Vance, a clinical psychologist and co-founder of the program. "In a gallery setting, surrounded by beauty and silence, the brain shifts from a 'fight or flight' state into a 'flow' state. That is where true healing begins."

From patients to painters

One of the program's most vocal supporters is Thomas Miller, a retired firefighter who struggled with PTSD for years. "For a long time, my world felt like it was only black and white," Miller

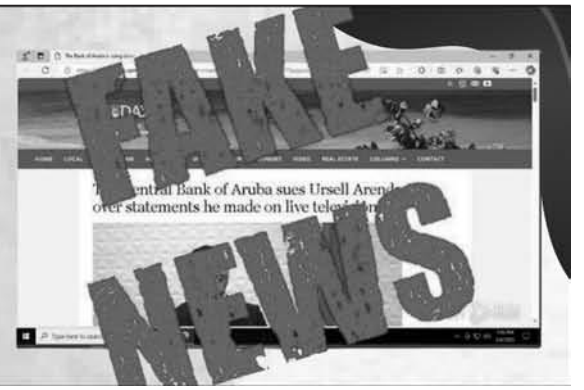
said, standing in front of a sprawling, vibrant abstract canvas he titled *The First Sunrise*. "Coming here taught me how to look for color again. I'm not 'fixing' my past; I'm painting a new future over the top of it."

The galleries don't just offer classes; they provide "Open Studio" hours where participants can work in total anonymity, free from the pressure of critique. For many, the gallery has become a secular sanctuary—a place to process grief, celebrate recovery, or simply exist in a space that celebrates human resilience. □

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Classroom wisdom: Second graders reveal the secret to everlasting love

AUSTIN, TX – In an age of complex dating algorithms and high-priced relationship coaching, the most profound marriage advice in America might just be coming from a group of seven-year-olds in Room 402 at Maplewood Elementary. When second-grade teacher Miss Maya Montgomery announced to her class that she was getting married this June, she expected a few giggles and questions about the flavor of the cake. What she received instead was a handwritten "Guide to a Happy Life" that has since gone viral, capturing the hearts of millions and reminding the country that sometimes, adults make things far too complicated.



Guidance counselor and author Karina Medina speaks to children from the Brooklyn and Queens boroughs during an immigration workshop at the Museum of Tolerance on May 6, 2013 in New York City.

The "coffee and compliments" rule

The project began as a simple writing exercise. Miss Montgomery asked her students to finish the sentence: "To stay married forever, you should..." The results were a mix of hilarious pragmatism and heart-tugging sincerity.

Seven-year-old Leo took a domestic approach: "You should bring her coffee every morning, even if she is already awake. And don't forget the sugar, or she might get a little 'grumpyish'." His classmate, Sophie, focused on the emotional labor of a partnership. "You have to tell him he looks

handsome even when he is just wearing his pajamas," she wrote in careful cursive. "And if he loses his keys, don't yell. Just help him look under the couch cushions."

Lessons in resilience

While many of the tips prompted laughter, some students touched on the

deeper resilience required to make a life together work. Eight-year-old Julian, whose own parents recently celebrated their tenth anniversary, offered a piece of advice that many marriage counselors would envy. "Never stop holding hands," Julian wrote. "Because if

you are holding hands, it is much harder to walk away when you are mad. You have to stay right there and talk about it."

Miss Montgomery says she was moved to tears by the depth of her students' observations. "We often think children aren't paying attention to the way adults interact," she said, clutching the stack of construction paper "books" her students bound for her. "But they see everything. They see the small kindnesses, the way we resolve conflicts, and the way we support each other. They are mirrors of the love they see around them."

A viral sensation

After Miss Montgomery shared a few snippets of the advice on her social media page, the post exploded. Within 48 hours, it had been shared over 200,000 times. Users from across the globe began commenting with their own stories of "classroom wisdom." "I've been married forty years," wrote one commenter from London. □

About 700 dogs and cats rescued from Los Angeles shelter

Los Angeles, United States

About 400 dogs and 300 cats were rescued Friday from an animal shelter north of Los Angeles in potentially the largest such operation in U.S. history, officials said. The animals were found living in poor conditions at a facility in Lake Hughes, 70 miles (110 kilometers) north of Los Angeles. U.S. media identified the shelter as Rock N Pawz. More than 70 workers with the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control were involved in the rescue, along with members of animal welfare organizations. "This is the largest number of dogs and cats the Animal Control Department has ever recovered and may be the largest

such case in the United States," the department said in a social media post. The animals were housed in cages with sporadic feeding and no water as the region was experiencing a heat wave, said Marcia Mayeda, the department director. "She had been taking in more animals than she could properly care for," Mayeda said at a press conference at the scene, referring to the shelter owner.

"This resulted in a very negligent and dangerous situation for the animals, who needed to be removed for their safety." The animals in serious condition were taken to veterinary centers, while others went to shelters for monitoring and treatment. □



Mamacita, a Chihuahua, is cared for at a mobile veterinary service for pets in Skid Row on July 13, 2020 in Los Angeles, California.

Nationwide surge in medical debt relief transforms millions of households

COLUMBUS, OH – For Sarah Jenkins, a primary school teacher and mother of two, the red-inked envelopes in her mailbox had become a permanent fixture of her daily life. Following an emergency surgery three years ago, Sarah found herself buried under \$15,000 of medical debt a sum that felt insurmountable on a modest educator's salary.

"It wasn't just the money," Sarah shared, sitting on her sun-drenched porch. "It was the weight. It felt like I was walking underwater every single day. I couldn't save for my kids' college, and I certainly couldn't breathe."

Last Tuesday, that weight vanished. Sarah received a letter, not from a collection agency, but from a state-backed initiative informing her that her debt had been purchased and abolished. She is one of millions of Americans currently experiencing the "Great Relief" a historic, bipartisan movement to wipe out billions of dollars in medical debt across the country.

A grassroots miracle goes mainstream

The movement, which began with small non-profits and "debt jubilees" organized by local churches,

has officially scaled into a massive public-policy success story. In the last year alone, fourteen states have passed landmark legislation to use budget surpluses and federal American Rescue Plan funds to buy medical debt from hospitals for pennies on the dollar.

Because hospitals often sell "uncollectible" debt to third-party collectors at a steep discount, these state programs and partner organizations like RIP Medical Debt can turn a \$10 million investment into \$1 billion of actual relief for citizens.

"This is the most efficient way to change a life," says Dr. Marcus Thorne, a health economist involved in the Ohio rollout. "When you remove medical debt, you aren't just fixing a balance sheet. You are improving mental health, increasing physical recovery rates, and putting money directly back into the local economy."

The "health-wealth" connection

Data released this month shows that the impact of this relief is immediate. Families whose debt was cleared in the first wave of 2025 have shown a 30% increase in "preventative care" visits. Free from the fear of being hounded for



Jason of Pennsylvania, Beyssa of Florida and Rocio of Colorado take part in Community Catalyst's day action during the Medical Debt Day of Action on Capitol Hill on April 29, 2025 in Washington, DC.

past bills, people are finally returning to the doctor for check-ups, catching illnesses early, and avoiding the very emergencies that caused the debt in the first place.

In North Carolina, where a record-breaking \$4 billion in debt was recently wiped out, local businesses are reporting a "relief ripple." With the threat of wage garnishment gone, thousands of residents are finally applying for car loans, starting small businesses, and spending more at local grocery stores and pharmacies.

A new standard of compassion

The "Medical Debt Relief Act of 2026" has also introduced new protections that ensure this crisis doesn't repeat. New transparency laws now require hospitals to proactively screen patients for financial assistance eligibility before any bill is sent to collections.

"We are shifting the culture of healthcare from a transaction to a service," says State Senator Linda Vera. "No one should have to choose between their physical health and their finan-

cial survival. Today, we've decided that a medical emergency should not be a life sentence of poverty."

Hope for the future

Back in Columbus, Sarah Jenkins is already planning her next move. With the \$300 a month she used to spend on debt interest, she's enrolled her daughter in piano lessons and started a small savings account.

"I feel like a citizen again," Sarah said with a smile. "I'm not a 'debtor' anymore. I'm just a mom, a teacher, and a neighbor. That's a beautiful thing to be." □



A person wears a hat for shade under the morning sun while walking along The Strand in Redondo Beach, California on March 20, 2026, during a heat wave.

Los Angeles, United States

A record early heat wave striking the west of the United States on Friday is a one-in-500-years type event and all but cer-

tainly the result of human-caused climate change, experts say.

The heat has been toppling records this week and was set to continue

Record-breaking heat wave grips western U.S.

into the weekend across western cities, expanding eastward.

One spot in the desert area at Martinez Lake, Arizona registered 43C - a U.S. national record for March. Already, 65 cities have seen new March highs, ranging from Arizona and California to Idaho, weather.com reported.

Death Valley on Thursday scorched in 40C degrees while the often cool and foggy San Francisco tied its historic March record at 29C degrees, and skiers in Colorado were hitting the slopes shirtless.

The National Weather Service issued extreme heat warnings Friday for much of the southwest, ranging from Los Angeles and coastal southern California to the desert gambling capital of Las Vegas. Warnings were issued against leaving children or pets in cars.

The phenomenal heat when winter is only just ending alarmed climate watchers, who saw evidence of dire change.

"This heatwave would be virtually impossible for the time of year in a world

without human-induced climate change," World Weather Attribution scientists said in a report.

They called the event so rare that despite overall rising temperatures something this serious is only "expected to occur about once every 500 years."

"These findings leave no room for doubt. Climate change is pushing weather into extremes that would have been unthinkable in a pre-industrial world," said one of the study's authors, Friederike Otto, a climate science professor at Imperial College London. □

Vanishing glacier on Germany's highest peak prompts ski lift demolition

Grainau, Germany

Vanishing glaciers atop Germany's highest mountain prompted the start of demolition operations of a ski lift Friday, as global warming reshapes the Alps. A ski slope down the Schneeferner glacier on the Zugspitze mountain has melted away, leading the lift operator to begin dismantling the structure after more than 50 years of service.

"The glaciers in Bavaria will inevitably melt away, as they can no longer survive in the face of climate change," Christoph Mayer, a glaciologist at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, told AFP.

High-tension cables anchoring the existing ski lift were cut with blasting charges in Friday's operation. The lift's pylons, which were built on the ice, then fell and were dragged away through the snow by heavy machinery. The peak of Zugspitze, which stands at 2,962 metres (9,700 feet), is located in the Wetterstein massif along Germany's border with Austria.

"The ice is receding, the terrain and the lift have



Excavators dismantle support structures of the Schneefernerkopf ski lift as it is demolished at the Zugspitze ski resort near Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany on March 20, 2026.

changed drastically," said Laura Schaper, spokeswoman of the ski lift operator Bayerische Zugspitzbahn Bergbahn AG.

"The slope has become significantly steeper, and for that reason it's no longer technically feasible to keep operating the lift."

New data on the remaining glaciers in the Bavarian Alps released Thursday found that the glaciers have receded by more than a

quarter just between 2023 and 2025, losing around one million cubic metres of ice.

Wilfried Hagg, a geologist at the Munich University of Applied Sciences who worked on the study alongside Mayer, told AFP that climate change is entirely to blame.

Hagg told AFP that there's "absolutely no" chance of saving any of Germany's remaining glaciers.

There are four remaining glaciers in Bavaria: the northern part of the Schneeferner and the Hoellentalferner, which is also located on the Zugspitze.

Two others are both located on the Berchtesgarden massif: the Wazmann, at 2,713 metres, and Blaueis at 2,607 metres.

Those glaciers "are in very bad shape," Hagg said, with the two on Berchtesgarden "likely to disappear completely very soon this

year or next".

- 'Absolutely doomed' -

The northern Schneeferner glacier, where the lift was being demolished, could survive for a few more years but will vanish within the decade, Hagg said.

The nearby southern Schneeferner glacier was declared dead in 2022.

"That would leave one very last glacier on the Zugspitze, known as the Hoellentalferner, which is set to disappear in the 2030s," Hagg said.

Already, summer melt far outpaces the winter snowfall even at the high elevation of the Zugspitze glaciers, according to Mayer and Hagg.

"Even under the most optimistic climate scenarios, or even if we could stop global warming immediately, they would disappear," he said. "They're absolutely doomed."

According to the EU's Copernicus climate observatory, the last three years have been the warmest ever recorded globally, due to increased greenhouse gas emissions that are causing global warming. □

Vancouver crowned world's greenest city for 2026

BRITISH COLUMBIA - In a historic win for North America, Vancouver has officially been named the most sustainable city on the planet for 2026. The prestigious ranking, released this week by the Global Urban Sustainability Index, places the "City of Glass" at the very top of a list of 500 metropolitan areas, beating out long-time champions like Copenhagen and Zurich.

For the residents of Vancouver, the news is a validation of a decade-long "Greenest City" initiative that once seemed like a lofty dream. Today, that dream is a tangible reality, visible in every bike lane, rooftop garden, and zero-

emission transit line snaking through the downtown core.

A Blueprint for the Future The judges cited Vancouver's "holistic approach to urban survival" as the deciding factor. Unlike cities that focus solely on carbon emissions, Vancouver was praised for integrating nature into the lives of its citizens.

"Sustainability isn't just about solar panels; it's about soul," said Elena Rossi, lead researcher for the Index. "Vancouver has successfully blended high-density urban living with a deep, restorative connection to the natural world. They aren't just saving the planet; they are making

life better for the people living on it."

Key to the city's success is its revolutionary "15-Minute Neighborhood" policy. Currently, 90% of Vancouverites live within a 15-minute walk of all their daily needs groceries, schools, parks, and work hubs. This has resulted in a 40% drop in local traffic congestion since 2022, turning former parking lots into vibrant community plazas and "pocket forests."

Breathing easier

The environmental metrics are equally staggering. Vancouver's air quality is now ranked the cleanest of any major city in the Western Hemisphere. This is largely credited to the



A bird takes flight as sea birds look for fish to eat during low tide near Carrot Park on September 20, 2024 in Port Hardy, North Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada.

"Green Canopy" project, which saw the planting of over 150,000 trees in underserved neighborhoods, cooling the city during summer months and creating a massive natural carbon sink. Furthermore, the city's waste-to-energy programs have achieved

a "Near-Zero" landfill status. By incentivizing circular economies where one business's waste becomes another's raw material the city has turned trash into a valuable resource, heating thousands of homes via sustainable district energy systems. □

South Sudan models dominate global catwalks but visas a problem

Juba, South Sudan

Heels click on cracked paving stones as fantastically long-limbed men and women practise moves they hope will whisk them away from South Sudan, one of the fashion world's favourite scouting locations.

Many hope to follow in the footsteps of their compatriot Awar Odhiang, who went from a refugee camp in Ethiopia to closing Chanel's Paris Fashion Week show last year.

South Sudan has been mired in conflict, poverty and corruption since its independence in 2011, but the success of its models has been a ray of positivity. No less than nine of the top 50 models currently listed on Models.com are originally from the east African country.

"Paris, Milan, London the fashion industry is dominated by South Sudanese boys and girls at the moment," said Doris Sukeji, founder of the Jubalicious modelling agency in the capital Juba.

"Mostly it's the skin colour. That is how most of the South Sudanese get signed. They are looking for very dark models," she said.



Professional models from the Juba-based modelling agency Jubalicious practise catwalking during a modelling training session on the agency office rooftop in Juba on February 20, 2026.

One of the first to blaze a trail was Alek Wek, scouted in London in the 1990s after her family fled an earlier war.

It was an image of Wek on her mother's Facebook feed that inspired Yar Agou, 19, now signed with Jubalicious.

"Damn! I saw her and I thought that is me one day if God is there. I want to make it like her," she told AFP in Juba.

All skinny-long limbs and charming attitude, Agou has what it takes for the runway, but politics is standing in the way of her dream.

She was supposed to be working at the recent Milan Fashion Week, but her visa was rejected at the last minute. For now, she is working as a cleaner, hoping there will be more opportunities.

- 'Heartbroken' -

Successful models can earn tens of thousands of dollars in a season, a life-changing amount in South Sudan where 92 percent live under the poverty line. But Sukeji said seven men and women had been rejected for visas in recent months despite having work sponsors, as the climate against immigrants hardens in the West.

"You get heartbroken," she said.

Bichar Hoah, 24, raised by a single mother in Kakuma refugee camp in neighbouring Kenya, was recently rejected for a European visa.

"There are some people who discourage us by saying that we tried and failed... (but) I want to represent South Sudan as a model," he said, hoping to change the narrative around his country.

- 'A chance' -

But even those who make it abroad face immense challenges in an industry known for relentless turnover.

Clients constantly want "new faces", Sukeji said.

There are added challenges in a conservative country like South Sudan.

As well as physical requirements tall but not above 5 foot 11 (1 metre 80) for women Sukeji must also contend with families who view modelling as a cover for prostitution.

"I always ask them to give the boy or the girl a chance," she said.

She brings them in for free training, which can take up to three months, taking a 10-percent cut if they get work. □

From bats to bonds: Uganda's 'cricket grannies'

Jinja, Uganda

Giggles and songs ripple across a field in rural eastern Uganda where elderly women swing cricket bats as a way to reshape what ageing, health and sports can look like in later life.

The so-called "cricket

grannies" are bound together by a growing love of a game they initially knew nothing about but is now helping them manage age-related health conditions, stress and loneliness.

Clad in floor-length dresses

and mostly barefoot, the women, aged 50 to 90, gather weekly at a playground in Jinja district, about 80 kilometres (50 miles) from the capital, Kampala.

Each swing draws cheers from teammates as the women turn Saturday morning practice into a lively spectacle.

"With the exercises I've been doing, my legs used to hurt, but they no longer do," Jennifer Waibi Nanyonga, 72, told AFP.

"I spent the whole of last year without seeing a doctor for my back, yet it had previously been paining me," added the grandmother of 29.

The initiative began in 2025 with just 10 grandmothers in the remote village of

Kivumbuka and has since grown more than tenfold.

The programme was initially aimed at children, but when cricket coach Aaron Kusasira realised their caregivers had little knowledge of the game and often kept them from joining, he decided to involve the elderly women, too.

"We come here, we jog, we move around, we do some stretches," Kusasira, 26, said.

They "unknowingly have to run because they have to compete," he added.

Physical inactivity is a leading risk factor for deaths from noncommunicable diseases and, according to the World Health Organization, it is more common among women globally.

International health data estimates that sedentary

lifestyles are costing public health systems roughly US\$27 billion per year, and will continue to rise if activity levels are not improved.

- Fresh start -

Beyond physical activity, cricket has also fostered a sense of community among the Ugandan grannies.

"When at home, you have no company and spend your time buried in your thoughts," said an elderly woman who only gave her first name, Patricia.

For others, the weekly meetings have proved cathartic.

"When I arrive here and see my friends, we get together and talk about our problems, we counsel each other," said Jennifer Waibi Nanyonga. □



An elderly woman run between the wickets during a cricket and physical training session in Jinja, on January 10, 2026.

The history and meaning of the Aruban florin

(Oranjestad)—Aruba Today loves to share parts of the Aruban culture with our readers, diving into (historical) facts of Aruba, its culture and way of living. In this article, we'll look at the Aruban florin: its history, design and symbolism.

In Aruba, we know the 5, 10, 25 and 50 cent coins, along with the 1 and 5 Florin coin. Aruban Florin bills include the 10, 25, 50, 100, and rarely, the 200 bills. In Papiamentu we call our currency Florin, but the umbrella term for money is 'placa'. Cents are called 'cen' (pronounced: seng), both in the singular and plural form. Most coins are circular and their size depend on their worth. However, the 50 cent coin is easily recognizable by their square shape, as is the 5 Florin coin by their golden color. Every coin has the Aruban emblem carved on it, with the other side displaying the worth of the coin. The bigger 1 and 5 florin coins, however, contain the carving of the emblem on one side, while displaying the side profile of the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, on the other side. When his mother, Princess Beatrix, was reigning queen, it was her profile that was carved on the two coins.

Outdated Aruban coins and their names

In the past, Aruban coins had distinctive names and also varied in worth. For example, a 5-cent coin was once called 'Dos Placa'; 10-cent coins were called 'Debchi'; 25-cent coins were called 'Diez Placa' and the 50-cent coin was once called 'Yotin' (pronounced: jo-teen). We also used a distinctive coins worth 2 ½ cents, called placa too. However, this last coin is no longer in use and has become a relic of Aruban money. Back then, the 5-Florin coin used to also be square, but now it is circular.

Aruban bills: their design and symbolism

The Aruban Florin collection contains a variation of colorful bills, displaying incredibly detailed and beautiful designs that tell the story of Aruba on a single piece of paper.

Prior to 2019, the Aruban Florin bills were relatively simpler in design compared to now, but still included beautiful designs and colors, often depicting local animals. These past designs were made by the Aruban artist Everino Fingal in 1990 up to 2019. Between 1990 and 1993, the 5 Florin coin was a bill. The Fingal designs also included a 500-Florin bill, which has now been discontin-



ued.

In 2019, the Central Bank of Aruba commissioned a new design of the Aruba Florin bills, this time selecting artist and former art teacher, Nigel Matthew, to present his new design. Matthew kept the tradition of including local animals and the familiar colors on the bills. However, he included additional designs that represent the Aruban culture and link to the Indigenous inhabitants that were the first to set foot on the island.

Current design and symbolism

10 florin

On the 10-florin bill, you can see a

Tortuga blanco (white turtle). The blue color symbolizes the blue Caribbean Sea. You can also see the ruins of the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins, a coral motif, and the symbols of Cas Floria (traditional Aruban house design) with a piece of mosaic.

25 florin

On this orange bill, you can see an Aruban medicinal plant called Shoshoro. The birds Trupiaal, Shoco, rock drawings, and the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic are also depicted. There is also a Purun di ceramica (clay pot), in reference to the relics left behind by our indigenous ancestors.

50 florin

On this bill, we see the Cododo (blue lizard found on the ABC islands), Cangreu di tera (land crab), Willem III Tower, and again the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, as well as a beach plant called Banana di rif. The colors are pink/purple.

100 florin

This bill is green in color, representing nature. Here we see the Yuwana (Iguana), Aloe, Toteki (lizard), the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, and a dance group performing the Baile di cinta (folkloric dance with silk ribbons).

200 florin

There is another bill with a value of 200 dollars. The brown color symbolizes the earth of Aruba. Here we see the Dornasol and the Warawara—both local birds, along with the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, the Tuna cactus plant, and the Caha di orgel (folkloric instrument, used for many traditional songs).

Extra fact:

The word "florin" is supposedly named after the Italian city of Florence or it's a reference to the Italian word "florino", both explanations related to historical Italian currencies. □

Source: Placa, placa, placa by the National Library of Aruba



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Magnet Perfume Jewelry & Cosmetics | The Lazy Lizard
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Celebrating Excellence:

Alhambra Casino's Crew Member 2025 Awards Ceremony



5TH Anniversary



10TH Anniversary



Director of Operation



Management Team



35TH Anniversary



15TH Anniversary



Meliain Loefstop - Supervisor of the year



Melinda Hassell - Crewmember of the year



Alhambra
CASINO AND SHOPS

At Alhambra Casino, our crewmembers are the heart of everything we do. In late February, we proudly celebrated their dedication and achievements during a special recognition event filled with **glamour, gratitude, and appreciation.**

Corporate leaders **Susan Varnes, President & COO of Treasure Bay Resort and Casino,** and **Lee Ann Hunter, Vice President of Finance,** traveled to Aruba to personally present awards and celebrate the incredible contributions of our team.

The event featured inspiring opening remarks from **Annie Dirksz, Marketing Manager,** and **Jan ten Have, Director of Operations,** highlighting how our crew members have helped make Alhambra Casino a premier gaming and entertainment destination in Aruba for **over 40 years.**

During her speech, **Susan Varnes** shared how inspiring it has been to witness the friendships and strong connections crewmembers build over the years—with colleagues, family, and peers.

She emphasized the powerful impact hospitality professionals have on the moods and lives of others every day.

She closed with an inspiring message: "We can choose to tear each other down—and there is already too much of that in our world today. Or we can choose to lift each other up, support one another in achieving our goals, celebrate each other's success, and be good role models—not only at work, but at home and in our communities."

Special recognition included:

- **16 Anniversary Awards** honoring crewmembers with 5 to 35 years of service
- **66 Perfect Attendance Awards**
- **Crewmember of the Year 2025:** Melinda Hassell
- **Supervisor of the Year 2025:** Meliain Loefstop

With a special lunch by Chef Junior, great music by The Sherries, and the support of the Divi Team, it was a memorable celebration of the people who make Alhambra Casino truly exceptional. Congratulations

#AlhambraCasino #CrewmemberRecognition #TeamExcellence #Aruba

Aruba's Bocas: home to the rarest fossil reefs on the planet!

(Oranjestad)—If you've been to the northern coast of Aruba already, you've probably noticed how the ground differs entirely from the sandy beaches on the southern part of the island. These hard surfaces, with sharp bumps and holes are actually fossilized coral reefs, of which its growth and changes can be traced back to the last glacial period.

On May 30 2023, geoscientists, Dr. Patrick Boyden from the Marum research faculty at the University of Bremen, Prof. dr. Alessio Rovere from the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Prof. dr. Gianfranco Scicchitano, from the University of Bari Aldo Moro, presented their research on these fossilized coral reefs at the University of Aruba. Their focus for their research included studying the health and formation patterns of these coral reefs, and to investigate how



these reefs have responded and can respond to fluctuating sea levels or extreme weather, like hurricanes and tsunamis.

Through underwater and land surveillance, and 3D

models of the reefs, they were able to narrow down when these formations started to take place. They were also able to track the fluctuation of sea levels during the past hundred or even thousands of years, and the

effects that this fluctuation has had on the coral reefs of the windward side of Aruba.

These findings can certainly put things into perspective. The ground on which we have walked many times

on the northern part of the island hold such rich history, history that dates back to a time that most of us cannot even imagine. As the scientists themselves have pointed out, these fossilized reefs on the windward side are truly an incredible and rare remnant of geological history, as they provide a clear view of how these reefs have formed.

This research is also important for the future of coral reefs on the island. By studying rising sea levels and climate impact on these coral reefs, we are able to take concrete action in protecting and preserve our coral reefs. So, if you are ever visiting one of the bocas or driving along the northern part of the island, please be conscious to help protect our natural historical remnant. Oh, and wear (coral-friendly) sunscreen! ☐

The legend of the Kibrahacha tree

ORANJESTAD—The Kibrahacha is a famous tree known locally for its bright, yellow flowers that blooms for just three days. Scientifically known as *Tabebuia billbergii*, and in English as the Yellow Poui, this tree is native to the Caribbean islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao, and is considered among locals as one of the most spectacular trees on the island. But did you also know that the beautiful yellow flowers have a story behind them?

The Kibrahacha is said to have extremely hard wood—so hard that it can break an axe. In fact, that's what its name means in Papiamentu: "kibra" (break)



"hacha" (axe). The flowers bloom around April and May, but this only last for about three days, as the flowers start to fall off and the tree starts growing its green leaves. The Kibrahacha is especially particular, as it's the only one among its neighboring trees to starts blooming first.

The legend of the Kibrahacha

Written by Hubert (Lio Booi)

One day Aterima, who lived west of the hill Sero Warawara, woke up one day to find her father sleeping in his hammock, suffering a bout of terrible fever. Her mother was very worried, and as was the custom in the olden days, asked Aterima to go fetch Kudaweche, who was a epistemophile, to come see his father.

Aterima wasted to time and went to go fetch Kudaweche. Upon telling Kudaweche that her father was sick, he immediately accompanied Aterima back to her hut, where he encountered her father in

a bad state. Not willing to waste any time, he told Aretima that the only thing that can cure her father is a home-made potion made out of the Kibrahacha flower. At the time the Kibrahacha was not yet in her blooming season, but the stubborn Kudaweche was determined to bring back Aretima's father back to health, and so off they went to the nearest Kibrahacha tree.

When they arrived at the tree, they saw that it was covered head to toe in thorns, with only a few closed flowers at the very top. Kudaweche, experienced veteran in all things Aruban flora and fauna, told Aretima to start plucking the thorns of the tree to climb to the top where the flowers are. Aretima, just as determined to save her father, didn't hesitate to start.

To her surprise, every time she plucked a thorn of the tree, a bright, yellow flower bloomed in its place. The thorns were hard to pluck out, but Aretima continued plucking with enthusiasm



and wonder at the unfolding sight before her. Not too long after she was able to fill her entire satchel with the yellow flowers.

Kudaweche, satisfied to see Aretima so happy and encouraged to help her father, took her back to her hut.

Upon arriving back at the hut, Aretima's mother quickly made a tea out of the flowers and gave it to her sick husband. Miraculously, after just one sip of

the tea, the father's fever left his body immediately, and he opened eyes and sprung up feeling new.

The next morning, they all visited the same Kibrahacha tree that saved the life of Aretima's father and they saw another miracle. The tree was covered again in the same bright, yellow flowers, with not a thorn in sight. And as the legend goes, from that day on, the Kibrahacha tree no longer produced any more thorns. ☐

Ever heard of the cah'i orgel? A key instrument in Aruban folklore music

(Oranjestad)—The cah'i orgel music box is an important and unique instrument that is used on the ABC islands in the Dutch Caribbean. This instrument is a staple in our folklore music, and its significance in the traditions of Aruba has and continues to bring together the old and young.

The origin of the cah'i orgel is said to have come from Europe around 150 years ago. A cross breed between the barrel piano and the organ, the most popular stories said that the instrument came from either England or Germany, but made its way to Italy down to Venezuela, where in 1881, Mr. Horatio Sprock (1866-1949) from Curacao was first introduced to it. After that, Sprock made his own cah'i orgel "Josefina", and successfully debuted it on the streets of Barqui-



simeto. Back in Curacao, he started his own cah'i orgel business along with his brother Luis. In Aruba, it is said that the cah'i orgel was introduced by Rufo Wever, who later in his career became one of the composers for the Aruban national anthem.

Rufo Wever was a young musician in 1937 when he established his own cah'i orgel business on the island. Before that he experimented with his uncle's cah'i orgel, and he over the years he learned to build and repair the instrument. In fact, he was incredibly skilled in this, and he was one of the few to have recognized from the start that the cah'i orgel is an instrument that needs preserving.

As mentioned, the cah'i orgel is a music box. Made from mahogany wood, it

contains a cylinder with a maximum of eight music pieces. By rotating the lever on the front side of the box, the cah'i orgel produces music similar to that of a piano, and is accompanied often by someone else playing the "wiri", a percussion instrument made out of steel and reminiscent to the Spanish guiro. Back then, you would often also find someone playing the triangle alongside the cah'i orgel and wiri. In Aruba, the cah'i orgel and wiri is used for traditional music genres, such as the Aruban waltz, tumba, mazurka and more.

Fun fact: another name for the cah'i orgel is the "tingilingi box." □

Source: "E Cilinder Magico entre Aruba y Curaçao" by Marilyn Alcalá-Wallé, Herta Parabirising-Balentina and Nidia Rosaria-Wallé.

Know more about the Town Hall Eloy Arends building

The Monuments bureau shares some essential facts about the Town Hall known as the Eloy Arends building. The aim is to educate the community about the mansion's construction, history, and preservation.

The Doctor Eloy Arends building is located at the Wilhelminastraat 8 and was the home of the Arends

family. It was the first building that the Monuments bureau, and the Government of Aruba, restored in 1997. Mr. Medardo 'Dada' Picus, was the architect of this Aruban-Caribbean building. The building sits on a 1.545 m² plot of land and is a typical Aruban mansion. It is an open home with false walls that allow the connection of the rooms

with each other.

The entrance has large doors and columns supporting the floor of the upper balcony. In between the columns, there are decoration details made out of wood. The elaborately detailed embellishment is known as gingerbread trim and the triangular decorative wall surface

over the columns is called the tympanum.

The top of the doors and windows have stained glass.

The building is not built on ground level but at approximately 1.5 meters above ground level. This mansion elevation created storage below the wooden floors and allowed proper ventilation.

The building has lots of windows which allow plenty of light inside, as well as good ventilation.

It has dormer windows and crowns on the outside part of the roof and different decorations on the edges of the walls and facade.

This is a stunning building full of beautiful details that resemble its beauty and transform into a history of love. Aruban tradition for "well-to-do" families dictates that before a man gets married, he has to present his future wife with a newly built and fully furnished house. It was certainly the case with this

building.

Due to the engagement between Eloy Arends and Monica Lacle (daughter of Adriaan Lacle, who is mainly known for the boulevard that bears his name), the construction of the mansion began in 1922 and was completed in 1925 when the couple got married.

The Office of the Civil Registry is located in the adjacent building, whereas the mansion hall is used exclusively for civil wedding ceremonies.

The Monuments bureau will continue to contribute and educate the community about the history of our monuments with significant value for Aruba. □



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stroke 40 Corpulent

6 Some files 41 Comfy

11 Treeless spots

plain 42 Extreme

12 Perfect diets

13 Barcelona

buddy

14 Sea ray

15 Classic

Ford

17 Cub's

cave

18 Mine

matter

19 Testing the

weight of

22 Homer's

neighbor

23 Sprinkle

with oil

24 Hot crime

25 "Water

Music"

composer

27 Buddy

30 Roil

31 Georgia

airport

code

32 Moody

music

33 Magic

word

35 Jessica of

"Tootsie"

38 "Wanda-

Vision"

star

Elizabeth

EDWIN FABLE
SIEGE ICEIN
SEALS GRAND
ROTE ORES
ALSO WEBS
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SPECIES ELM
CENT ABLY
MARIA ABEL
ALONE OSAKA
TOWIT WOMEN
HENCE SPEND

DOWN

1 Apply with

force, as

brakes

2 Writer

Leonard

3 Stole

from

4 "Picnic"

play-

wright

5 Reckless

6 Brink

7 Nabokov

novel

8 Mail, as

payment

9 Gizmo

protector

10 Informal

talk

16 Get

rigid

20 Infallible

21 Light

metal

24 What's

more

25 Kind

26 Venus's

love

27 Church

services

28 Swear

29 Genetic

copies

30 Honey-

dew,

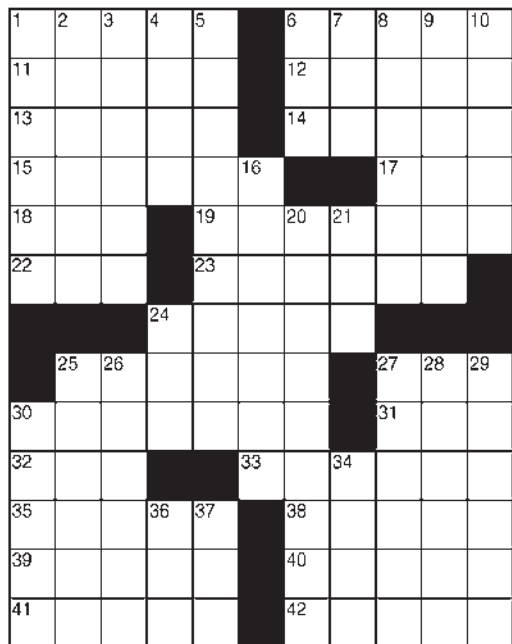
for one

34 Exile isle

36 Procured

37 USN

rank



4-1

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

4-1 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

RI ZQZJV KSJQRIT CZEKA, RI

ZQZJV TJERI UG DEIL FAZJZ

RD FAZ DFUJV UG FAZ ZEJFA.

— JEKAZP KEJDUI

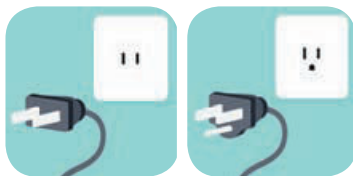
Cryptoquote: SOMEDAY WE'LL FIND IT, THE RAINBOW CONNECTION, THE LOVERS, THE DREAMERS AND ME. — KERMIT THE FROG

Cruise ship Schedule: March 16 - 22 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	16	VALIANT LADY	09.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	17	CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00	22.00	B	1
		NORWEGIAN SKY	13.30	22.30	C	1
WED	18	ROTTERDAM	08.00	17.00	B	1
		BRILLIANCE OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	C	1
		SERENADE OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	I	1
THU	19	MSC DIVINA	08.00	18.00	B	1
		AZAMARA QUEST	09.30	22.00	C	1
FRI	20	CARIBBEAN PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	B	1
		NORWEGIAN STAR	11.00	20.00	C	1
SUN	22	CELEBRITY ASCENT	09.00	23.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku

	9				6		4	5
6	8		1					
		7	2					
3		1						7
					9	6		8
						1		
			7	2	1	3		
	3		9				6	
				3				

Difficulty: ★★★★★

3/21

Answer to previous puzzle

3	4	2	6	7	8	9	5	1
1	9	8	3	2	5	6	4	7
6	7	5	1	4	9	3	8	2
2	6	4	9	3	7	8	1	5
9	8	1	5	6	2	4	7	3
5	3	7	8	1	4	2	6	9
7	1	9	2	8	6	5	3	4
8	2	3	4	5	1	7	9	6
4	5	6	7	9	3	1	2	8

Difficulty: ★★★★★

3/20

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Vaccines facing misinformation spike: WHO experts

Geneva, Switzerland

Vaccine programmes are being challenged by rising misinformation and an uncertain pipeline for research funding, the World Health Organization's immunisation experts said Wednesday.

And the war in the Middle East will likely hamper the fight against polio, the WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunisation (SAGE) said.

The group held its biannual meeting last week, focusing on Covid-19 jab recommendations, typhoid vaccine dosing schedules and oral polio vaccine doses in routine immunisation.

"Emerging challenges for the future include uncertain funding for vaccine research and development, and misinformation and distorted information that erodes public trust in vaccines," said SAGE.

"Protecting trust and countering misinformation will be a central focus in 2026," WHO vaccines chief Kate O'Brien said resources would be targeted this year on protecting the roll-out of core immunisation programmes.

"We're in a really deeply changing world for infectious diseases and for vaccine programmes," she said, due to conflicts, economic challenges and health budgets being cut. Trust in vaccines is being "threatened by misinformation", she told a press conference.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr, the US health chief, has long voiced anti-vaccine rhetoric and inaccurate claims connecting vaccines and autism.

A WHO review of all available evidence issued in December reaffirmed there is no link between vaccines and autism -- contrary to the theories being propagated in the United States and beyond.

"Vaccines do not cause autism and they never have caused autism," stressed O'Brien.

She said vaccines had saved 154 million lives over



A sign for COVID-19 vaccines is posted in front of a CVS store on October 29, 2025 in San Francisco, California.

the past 50 years, and more than 30 diseases could be prevented through immunisation.

"The risk is about backsliding, or even countries deciding that they can't afford all of the vaccines that are in their programme," she said.

- Crisis and response cycle -

The group voiced concern over the ongoing transmission of wild poliovirus in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the persistent detection of vaccine-derived type-2 poliovirus in several African countries, a strain related to the weakened live poliovirus contained in oral polio vaccines.

"The conflict in the Middle East may well lead to further dissemination of polioviruses, which would then add to the burden to be mopped up in order to reach that eradication goal," SAGE chair Anthony Scott told reporters.

O'Brien added: "There are billions and billions of dollars being spent, day in and day out to destroy lives through wars."

"Does the world have its priorities straight about what we're investing in?" As for Covid jabs, SAGE said countries should consider routine vaccination twice a year for groups at the highest risk of severe disease, because of

the dwindling protection levels beyond six months. O'Brien said the Covid-19 vaccine market had contracted down to a limited number of manufacturers and types, with mRNA vaccines remaining the dominant form. □



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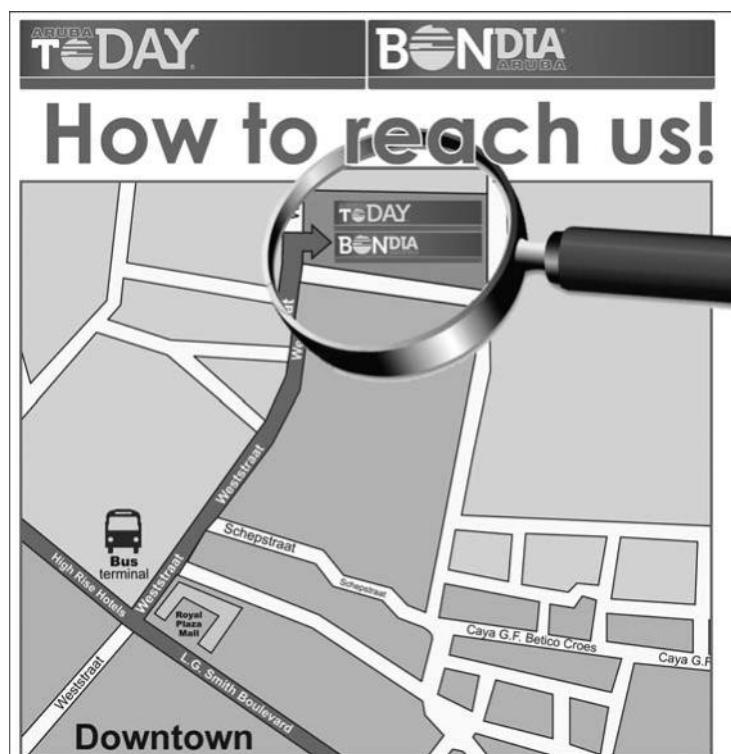
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EMERGENCY

Police	100
Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
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Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

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Tel. 582 5051
Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989
Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes
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ARUBA TODAY NEWS



A visitor takes a picture of BTS photos displayed at a BTS pop-up store at Shinsegae Department Store's The Heritage in Seoul on March 20, 2026.

New BTS album drops ahead of comeback mega-gig

Seoul, South Korea

K-pop megastars BTS released a new album Friday, as buzz built ahead of their open-air comeback concert in Seoul that will go ahead despite leader RM being advised to rest his injured ankle.

The Saturday gig, expected to draw around 260,000 people, will be BTS's first after a hiatus of almost four years while all seven members served compulsory military service. It comes ahead of an 82-date world tour.

On Friday BTS's management said that medical staff recommended RM, 31, wear a cast and "minimize all physical movement" for at least two weeks after hurting his ankle the day before in rehearsals.

But "the artist himself expressed a strong desire to deliver a performance of the highest quality", Big Hit Music said.

"Consequently, we wish to inform you that RM's participation in certain performance elements, such as choreography on stage, will be restricted," a statement added.

Earlier, BTS released their fifth studio album, billed as reflecting the maturing boy band's Korean roots and identity.

Streaming giant Spotify

said that fans pre-saved the album more than five million times, a record for a K-pop act.

The 14-track "ARIRANG" takes its name from a folk song about longing and separation that is often dubbed South Korea's unofficial national anthem.

"We gave deep thought to our identity and how best to express ourselves authentically across the entirety of our music and performances," said BTS member Jimin, 30.

"As an extension of that process, we also revisited the significance of our background as a group comprised entirely of Korean members," he said in a statement.

Ces-Marie Hilo, 40, a fan from the United States, said she listened to the album while waiting to purchase BTS merchandise.

"We are still listening to the album and it's amazing so far," Hilo told AFP. "I can hear tidbits from their roots but the majority are new sounds from them and a mix of different genres."

- 'Really, really cool' -

Excitement, meanwhile, grew in Seoul, with hotels long since booked out and thousands flying in from

overseas, ramming home the immense popularity of a multi-award-winning act singing mostly in Korean.

BTS are the music vanguard of a Korean cultural wave, which includes Oscar-winning films like "Parasite" and "KPop Demon Hunters", hit dramas like "Squid Game", Nobel-winning author Han Kang, food and cosmetics.

Streets were festooned with purple-and-blue "Welcome BTS & ARMY" signs, referring to the group's fandom. BTS hoodies, wallets and figurines were on sale at new pop-up stores and convenience shops.

Mara Cristia Yao and Rodessa Ericka Bonon, fans from the Philippines, could not secure their tickets for the Saturday concert.

"We are just going to come to this area anyway. We are figuring out where to position ourselves tomorrow," Yao told AFP, taking pictures with each other near where the stage was being set up.

"I am watching people from all around the world. That is like, really, really cool. Because we are gathered together for BTS. To support them, to support their comeback, to listen to their new music as well," said Araceli Cahua, 27, from Peru. □



Folk singer Emily Portman poses for a photograph holding a laptop displaying a screenshot of a counterfeit album falsely claiming to be created by her in Sheffield, northern England, on November 21, 2025.

Global music market grows, calls for AI compensation: industry body

London, United Kingdom

The global music industry generated \$31.7 billion last year, driven by online streaming, industry body IFPI said Wednesday, as it called on the sector to ensure AI-generated content compensates musicians.

Music revenues rose 6.4 percent, marking the eleventh consecutive year of expansion, according to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, which represents more than 8,000 global record labels. Streaming accounted for nearly 70 percent of annual revenue, with paid streaming subscriptions reaching 837 million subscribers worldwide.

But the IFPI warned against the increasing threat of AI-generated streams of fake content.

"Streaming fraud is theft, plain and simple," the group said in its annual report, calling instead for technology to "support and enhance creativity, not replace it."

AI-generated tracks regularly go viral, such as the runaway success of an AI cover of Belgian musician Stromae's "Papaoutai" at the end of January.

According to the report, Deezer revealed that it receives more than 60,000 AI-generated tracks every day.

AI music generation platforms -- such as U.S. based Suno and Udio -- argue their work is covered by the American copyright loophole of "fair use," which does not require rights holders' consent.

The IFPI urged policymakers to uphold copyright protections.

"Music is embracing the future, demonstrated by record company partnerships with generative AI developers who respect the rights of creators," the group said.

Suno reached an agreement with record label Warner Music Group in November to compensate artists whose work is used to create AI-generated tracks.

Revenues from physical formats were up, including from vinyl which grew 13.7 percent.

Asia drove the rise in vinyls and CDs, while these formats were almost non-existent in the North Africa and Middle East market, where streaming accounts for 97.5 percent of revenue.

Taylor Swift was the biggest-selling global artist of 2025, followed by Korean group Stray kids and Canadian rapper Drake. □

Swiatek stunned at Miami Open by 50th-ranked Linette

Miami, United States

Iga Swiatek crashed out of the Miami Open second round Thursday as 50th-ranked fellow Pole Magda Linette fought back for a 1-6, 7-5, 6-3 victory over the six-time Grand Slam champion.

Reigning Wimbledon champion Swiatek, who won the Miami Open in 2022, suffered her first opening loss at a tournament since the 2021 WTA Finals.

It's just the latest disappointment for Swiatek, who was eliminated in the quarter-finals at the Australian Open and in the WTA 1000 events in Doha and Indian Wells.

Although she was seeded second in the elite combined ATP and WTA hard-court tournament in Miami, Swiatek dropped this week to third in the world as Indian Wells finalist Elena Rybakina moved up behind top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka.

Swiatek's compatriot Linette had to dig deep after Swiatek who won their last encounter 6-1, 6-1 raced through the opening set in 33 minutes.

But she stuck to her guns and Swiatek double-faulted to give Linette two break



Magda Linette of Poland returns a shot to Iga Swiatek of Poland on Day 3 of the Miami Open Presented by Itau at Hard Rock Stadium on March 19, 2026 in Miami Gardens, Florida.

points in the 12th game of the second set, Linette forcing a third set with a return winner.

"I just had to go for a little bit more," Linette told Tennis Channel. "I had to start hitting a little bit faster, too, to push her a little bit more back, not give her space. "But I think it all started with serving a bit better," she added.

Swiatek didn't go meekly, saving a pair of match points on her own serve in

the eighth game of the third and two more as Linette served for the match, before Linette sealed the win as Swiatek sent a backhand wide.

"She actually gets really good on those break points down, match points down," Linette said. "She starts swinging. I just knew I had to stay strong on my serve." Linette advanced to a third-round matchup against 20-year-old Alexandra Eala of the Philippines, a 6-7 (6/8), 6-3, 6-3 winner over Germany's Laura Siege-

mund.

"It really was close," said Eala, a surprise semi-finalist last year who needed three hours and 20 minutes to close out the victory.

"It was demanding, physically and mentally. But that was one of my goals last year after the tournament, to improve physically, and here I am fresh as a flower." It was the longest WTA career match for 29th-ranked Eala, who beat Swiatek in last year's Miami Open quarter-finals for the biggest

win of her career before losing to American Jessica Pegula in the semi-finals.

Former world number one Venus Williams, 45, lost her first-round match to Britain's Francesca Jones 7-5, 7-5 after one hour and 51 minutes.

Jones advanced to a second-round match against fifth seed Pegula, last year's Miami runner-up to Sabalenka.

- Fonseca books Alcaraz clash -

On the men's side 19-year-old Brazilian Joao Fonseca outlasted Hungary's Fabian Marozsan 6-4, 3-6, 6-2, to book a second-round match with world number one Carlos Alcaraz.

Fonseca, ranked 39th, was strongly backed by Brazilian fans as he booked a first-ever meeting with Alcaraz and his second marquee contest in as many tournaments after falling to Jannik Sinner at Indian Wells last week.

French 17-year-old Moise Kouame beat qualifier Zachary Svajda 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 to become the youngest player to claim an ATP Masters 1000 victory since Rafael Nadal in Hamburg in 2003. □

Wembanyama lifts playoff-bound Spurs, Doncic and James fuel Lakers

Los Angeles, United States

Victor Wembanyama's game-winner lifted the San Antonio Spurs to a 101-100 triumph over Phoenix and into the NBA playoffs Thursday as the Los Angeles Lakers kept up their post-season push with an eighth straight victory.

Luka Doncic scored 60 points and 41-year-old LeBron James hit another NBA milestone in style with a 19-point, 15-rebound, 10-assist triple-double in the Lakers' 134-126 victory over the Heat in Miami.

The Lakers' surge has seen them climb from sixth to third in the Western Conference, where second-placed San Antonio have now joined reigning champions Oklahoma City with their first playoff berth since

2019.

Knowing they could punch their playoff ticket with a win, the Spurs trailed by 10 with 4:50 left to play.

They were five back with 1:01 remaining when Wembanyama drained a pair of free throws and De'Aaron Fox drove for a layup to cut the deficit to one with 26.6 seconds left. The Spurs bottled up Devin Booker to force the Suns to call a timeout and on the ensuing inbounds Wembanyama fouled rookie Rasheer Fleming who missed both free throws.

When Wembanyama's basket over Oso Ighodaro swished through the net the crowd at Frost Bank Center went wild.

"We haven't had a game

like this in a while," said Wembanyama, who led all scorers with 34 points and added 12 rebounds. "Feels good to know we've still got it."

The 22-year-old French star was trying to take a measured approach now that his first trip to the playoffs is assured.

"Of course the first instinct is to be proud of it and to love it because we're part of it," he said. "But the key for me is to try to not care because we want to attack 82 games.

"I'm scared to become complacent."

In Miami, James tied Robert Parish's record for most NBA regular-season games played with his 1,611th -- a

mark he can surpass when the Lakers play in Orlando on Saturday.

Both James and Doncic were listed as "question-

able" on the Lakers' early injury report after the team arrived in Miami at 4:00 am in the wake of their win in Houston on Wednesday. □



Victor Wembanyama #1 of the San Antonio Spurs scores against Phoenix Suns in the second half at Frost Bank Center on March 19, 2026 in San Antonio, Texas.

Mahuchikh soars to world indoor high jump gold, Hodgkinson cruises

Torun, Poland

Ukraine's world record holder Yaroslava Mahuchikh dominated the women's high jump to win the first gold on offer at the world indoor championships in Torun, Poland, on Friday.

Mahuchikh, the Olympic champion who won a first world indoor title in Belgrade in 2022, cleared a best of 2.01 metres.

Australia's reigning world indoor and outdoor champion Nicola Olyslagers shared silver with Serbia's Angelina Topic and Ukrainian Yuliya Levchenko.

"Before Torun, I had already collected the full set of world indoor medals but, coming here, I realised how I'm hungry for the gold one," said Mahuchikh.

"Torun is the city where many Ukrainians moved after the war was started in our country but I was really surprised how many fans came here to support me. It was amazing."

The four medallists were the sole jumpers left in competition at the 1.96m mark.

The bar was raised to 1.99m and first up was Mahuchikh. She sailed over, but so did the three others.

Mahuchikh kept up the pressure with a first time clearance of 2.01m.

All three of her rivals strug-



Ukraine's Yaroslava Mahuchikh competes in the women's final high jump event during the World Athletics Indoor Championships Kujawy Pomorze 2026 in Torun, Poland on March 20, 2026.

gled with that height, registering three failures apiece to hand victory to the Ukrainian, who had three failed attempts at 2.06m.

One of the stars of the three-day competition in Poland is Britain's Keely Hodgkinson, who smashed the indoor 800m world record last month.

Untimely injuries have prevented the 24-year-old from taking part in the past three editions of the world indoors.

But the Briton, who earned Tokyo Olympic silver and

Paris Olympic gold and who has two world outdoor silver medals and a bronze, looks to be in perfect shape and coasted through her heat in 2:00.32.

"I am glad to take the win today, it is a job well done," said Hodgkinson.

"It is all about controlling your pace. I am happy to run again tomorrow.

"I have gone to the championships before and then not run due to injury so I am really happy now to get to the start line and go to the next round. I hope I will end with the gold medal."

The semi-finals of the women's 800m are scheduled for 1122 GMT on Saturday, with the final set for 1853 GMT on Sunday.

- Azu leads favourites -

Defending champion Jeremiah Azu safely negotiated the first round of the men's 60m, with the semi-finals set for 1916 GMT and the final at 2022 GMT later Friday.

"Coming here as the title defender, I don't feel any pressure," said Britain's Azu. "Today is going to be a long day. It looks a lot easier on TV than it is in reality. I

want to bring the title back to the UK."

Azu, who clocked a heat-winning 6.55sec, finds himself in the middle of a US-Jamaica sandwich.

The strong trio of Jamaicans led by Kishane Thompson, the world and Olympic 100m silver medallist, all won their heats as they seek to end the Caribbean island's gold drought in the event.

The U.S. team have never had a problem picking up golds, with the likes of Maurice Greene, Justin Gatlin, Christian Coleman and Trayvon Bromell all previously winning on the world indoor stage.

Bromell, who won back in 2016 and was part of the world gold medal-winning 4x100m relay team last year in Tokyo, won his heat in a leading 6.52sec.

U.S. newcomer Jordan Anthony, world leader at 6.43sec joint ninth on the world indoor all-time list, also cruised in his heat.

"I felt really good during the race," said Bromell.

"I am in the kind of a shape I was in when I won the world indoor title in Portland 10 years ago.

"I have been struggling with injuries for the last couple of years but now I feel ready," added the 30-year-old. □

Pogacar targets elusive Milan-San Remo as Van der Poel defends crown

Milan, Italy

Tadej Pogacar and Mathieu van der Poel are set to face off for the first time

this season on Saturday as cycling's pre-eminent one-day riders vie for glory at the 298km long Milan-San

Remo.

The first "Monument" race of the year homes into view with both world champion Pogacar and last year's winner Van der Poel already showing hot form in Italy.

Pogacar claimed his fourth victory, and third in as many years, at Strade Bianche earlier this month, while Van der Poel won two stages in the Tirreno-Adriatico last week.

The 27-year-old sat out both Paris-Nice and Tirreno-Adriatico in preparation for Milan-San Remo, a rare race in which he can't just blow away the competition with long-range attacks.

Milan-San Remo and Paris-Roubaix are the two Monuments still missing from Pogacar's stellar list of career achievements which includes winning the Tour De France and the world championship the last two years.

"It's no secret that Milan-San Remo is a race I would love to win," said Pogacar after his UAE team named the seven-man line up for Saturday.

"I think it suits me well but also suits a lot of the other top guys. I see that as a good challenge."

And Pogacar is in the mood, recently clocking a time on Strava of eight

minutes and 51 seconds up the Cipressa climb, six seconds faster than his own official record for the key ascent.

The Cipressa is the penultimate climb 22 kilometres from the finish, which will come after hours of largely flat riding from Pavia and just before the final push up Poggio di San Remo.

- 'Matter of time' -

Pogacar is almost certain to attack on the Cipressa as he did last year when he tried to shake off Van der Poel and home hope Filippo Ganna, only to finish third behind both in the final charge for the line on Via Roma. □



UAE Team Emirates's Slovenian Tadej Pogacar celebrates as he crosses the line to win the 20th one-day classic 'Strade Bianche' (White Roads) men's cycling race between Siena and Siena in Tuscany on March 7, 2026.